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State Supported Terrorism by Iran, Syria, and Libya

Middle Eastern based terrorist groups and states are major perpetrators of terrorism that can ultimately be described as "state sponsored". In fact, terrorism of the Middle East origin accounted for about 40 percent of all international terrorism in 1984, and two thirds of that was conducted with the active support and encouragement or at a minimum with the acquiescence of three states--Iran, Syria, and Libya.

I. Iran the most dangerous state sponsor of terrorism:

- It has developed the greatest capability to conduct terrorist operations.
- It is the most vehemently anti-Western.
- It is motivated by a philosophical commitment to export its form of fundamentalist revolution and to attack anyone it perceives as standing in the way.
- Its primary targets are the US, France, Iraq, and the moderate Arab states

Iranian sponsored attacks in 1984:

Anti-US: 19 (18 in Lebanon)

Anti-French: 22 (19 in Lebanon)

Anti-Moderate Arabs: 21

Frightening new trends:

- Increased activity in Western Europe.
- Efforts to expand Iranian influence in areas of primary US security interests--i.e. Latin America.

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- Elements within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Revolutionary Guard, and the Prime Minister's Office all play a role.
- The Iranian Ambassador in Damascus has been key coordinator for Iranian-sponsored terrorism in Lebanon and the Persian Gulf.

Longer term prospects: Iran will expand its capability, become more "professional" in committing terrorism, and will broaden its activities geographically.

In the long term, Lebanon is likely to become increasingly dominated by Islamic Shia fundamentalism with Christian elements in a greatly reduced role. Shia extremists will continue to endeavor to expel all vestiges of Western influence. Lebanon could become a base for terrorist activity throughout the Middle East.

II. Syria: Sees use of terror as tool of statecraft--a way to extend its foreign policy reach.

- The most professional user/sponsor of terrorism and the most difficult to penetrate.
- The centralized control of the Syrian regime enables terrorism to be turned on or off like a faucet.
- Less direct involvement than Iran. Works through surrogates. Either direct terrorist groups such as radical Palestinians to act or "enables" them to do so by providing weapons and other support.

Primary Syrian targets in 1984:

- Jordan: Nine attacks, including five on or near US facilities.
- Moderate Palestinians: Seven attacks; those who might try to work toward a resolution of the Arab--Israeli dispute.
- Israel: Seven attacks.
- Other moderate Arab states, e.g. the UAE two attacks

In Syria, too, various elements of the government play a role in terrorism, including the chief of military intelligence. The exact relationship between Syria and Iran with regard to terrorist activity is not clear and probably changes as Damascus has different goals in mind.

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- Nevertheless, Syria allows Iranian Embassy in Damascus to coordinate terrorist activities and Iranian terrorist training bases to operate in the Bekaa Valley.

III. Libya: Qadhafi uses terror to enhance the power and image of his basically weak regime.

While Libyan terrorist capabilities are mixed, there are signs of improvement in 1984.

Major targets:

- Anti-Qadhafi exiles--13 attacks in 1984. This anti-dissident campaign will continue, even as some exiles are striking back by hitting Libyan officials, such as in Rome.
- Libya's opponents in Africa--France (in early months of 1984--because of French support to Habre in Chad), Zaire, Chad, the Central African Republic.
- Moderate Arabs--Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Sudan.

While US security interests are attacked when Libya strikes at US allies, there have been few instances of Libyan-sponsored terrorism against Western States directly. This probably reflects fear of likely strong Western reprisals should Libyan hand be discovered in any such terrorist operations.

Libya also supports some radical Palestinian groups--PELPG and Abu Nidal--that commit terrorism, some directed against US.

Libya is also likely to expand its activities geographically, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Qadhafi will seek to strengthen regional radicals, particularly the Sandanista regime; promote militant anti-US actions; and build a capability for terrorist operations in the region.

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IV. USSR: In all these countries, state-supported terrorism is a major instrument of policy. Iranian, Syrian, and Libyan attitudes and activities with regard to revolutionary violence and terrorism converge with Soviet interests in that they undermine US, NATO, and other Western interests worldwide. We know that the Soviets at least indirectly have given material support to terrorists; we do not know how much, if any, direct support Moscow has provided to terrorist groups or individuals. As long as terrorist groups identify ideologically with the Soviet Union and continue primarily to attack non-Bloc targets, however, the Soviets benefit from the disruptive and destabilizing effects of terrorism, which partly explains why they do not support international efforts to combat it.

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Terrorism: Increasing Violence in Western Europe

We have seen an increase in recent months of terrorist attacks in Western Europe against NATO and Allied military and civilian targets. Current developments foreshadow a further increase in the frequency of such attacks. Of special concern is evidence that the attacks involve some cooperation among the groups.

Involved have been the Communist Combatant Cell (CCC) in Belgium, Direct Action in France, and the Red Army Faction in Germany.

In Belgium a series of bombings have taken place against NATO pipelines and a US NATO support facility in Brussels has been attacked. The latter appeared to be meant to cause loss of life as well as physical damage.

In France, French Brigadier General Rene Audran was assassinated. This is the first involvement of the group Direct Action in execution style murder.

In West Germany there is a hunger strike by imprisoned Red Army Faction hardcore terrorists. As a result, their supporters and sympathizers have perpetrated about twenty bombings and attempted bombings of Allied military facilities.

Our past experience with RAF hunger strikes clearly indicates that if one of the hunger strikers dies, we are in for an intense and dangerous period of terrorist attacks.

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